

Secondhand Smoke

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Tobacco Facts

Secondhand smoke exposure is associated with 150,000-300,000 cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in children under 18 months.

Secondhand smoke contains chemicals proven to cause cancer in humans, according to the National Toxicology Program.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 65 percent of nonsmokers age 4 and above show signs of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Secondhand smoke affects everyone

Smoking is not just an issue of personal health for smokers; it is a public health issue that concerns everyone. Every year, about 3,000 adult nonsmokers die from lung cancer and 35,000 from coronary heart disease nationwide. Each time nonsmokers are exposed to secondhand smoke their health is affected – whether sitting in the nonsmoking section of a restaurant that allows smoking or visiting a smoker's apartment, a nonsmoker's body immediately feels the effects.

People exposed to secondhand smoke greatly increase their risk of developing lung cancer, heart disease, asthma, bronchitis, ear infections, pneumonia, croup, and sore throats.

Children are particularly susceptible to secondhand smoke. Infants exposed to secondhand smoke increase their chances of getting respiratory diseases, ear infections, asthma, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Between 7,500 and 15,000 infants in the United States are hospitalized each year as a result of such diseases.

Washington laws help control secondhand smoke

The Washington Clean Indoor Air Act of 1985 (RCW 70.160), Labor and Industries Rules on Office Work Environments (WAC 296-240-800), and Governor's Executive Order 88-06, prohibit or limit smoking in offices, state facilities and vehicles, and other public places. However, many businesses and public areas are exempted from these regulations and much remains to be done to create healthy, smoke-free environments. The Clean Indoor Air Act specifically allows property owners and managers to prohibit smoking on their property (RCW 70.160.040(4)).

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Tobacco Program tackles secondhand smoke

Secondhand Smoke Community Assistance Project

In 2003 the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program established the Secondhand Smoke Community Assistance Project to help local communities increase the number of smoke-free public places. The project team coordinates secondhand smoke work in Washington and helps communities create policies to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke. The project also provides training, technical assistance, and resources.

Community-based programs

A 2002 survey of Washington adults found that 86 percent believe all people should be protected from secondhand smoke and about 70 percent support restrictions on smoking in restaurants. The Tobacco Program helps local communities build on that support by continuing smoke-free coalitions; encouraging local restaurants, apartment buildings, and other businesses to become smoke-free; and encouraging local governments to establish smoke-free public areas.

Find out more about
secondhand smoke:
SecondhandSmokesYou.com

Helping people quit

Restricting smoking in work places and public areas gives smokers a proven incentive to quit. If fewer places allow smoking, smokers are likely to smoke less, and society sends a message that smoking isn't acceptable.

Visit the youth Web site at:
UnfilteredTV.com

In addition, many smokers who will not quit for their own health will quit for the health of their families or others. The Tobacco Program provides information about the dangers of secondhand smoke to give people another reason to quit. For example, the program partners with other agencies to show low-income, pregnant women how secondhand smoke in their homes endangers their children.

Find out more about the
Tobacco Quit Line at:
quitline.com

Public awareness

The Tobacco Program conducts a statewide media campaign featuring ads that have been used effectively in other states. The campaign integrates with local public awareness initiatives to discourage people from smoking around others.

Evaluation

The Tobacco Program continues to evaluate the size of the secondhand smoke problem in Washington and gauge the program's progress towards creating smoke-free environments. Through surveys and analysis of data from multiple sources, the program monitors public opinion about secondhand smoke and policies to control exposure to this deadly toxin.

For more information on
tobacco prevention:
www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco

A comprehensive approach to fighting tobacco use

Research shows that state anti-tobacco programs must be broad-based and comprehensive to be effective. In addition to promoting smoke-free environments, Washington's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program provides services to help people quit, restricts the ability of kids to get tobacco, conducts public awareness and media campaigns, supports programs in communities and schools, and evaluates the effectiveness of its activities.